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ABSTRACT

Presented are recommendations for developing a secondary level work-study program for handicapped students. The recommendations given include provision for on-campus work training; opportunity for off-campus employment for students 16 years of age or older; employment placement based on readiness and need after assessment by the work-study coordinator, parents, and students; program development according to students' needs; and contact with students by a work-study coordinator who is both knowledgeable about special education and is given time for the coordinator role. Other suggestions are made such as scheduling for students to take part in extra curricular activities and regular class programs, organizing so that students can meet minimum requirements for graduation with a high school diploma, and integrating the classroom and work training program within the total curriculum structure. It is maintained that the program should involve as many school personnel as possible, that students should be placed selectively, that a task force of community leaders should be empowered to make decisions, and that the importance of evaluation should be communicated to employers, students, and parents. Stressed is the necessity for compliance with the education code and labor laws at each governmental level. Advised are a work-hour arrangement based on factors such as type and degree of handicap, health, school and home schedules, and employer need; and student pay at the minimum wage for off campus productive employment, and by class credit for employment during school hours. Emphasized is the crucial role of a professionally competent work-study coordinator in representing the school to the community. (MC)

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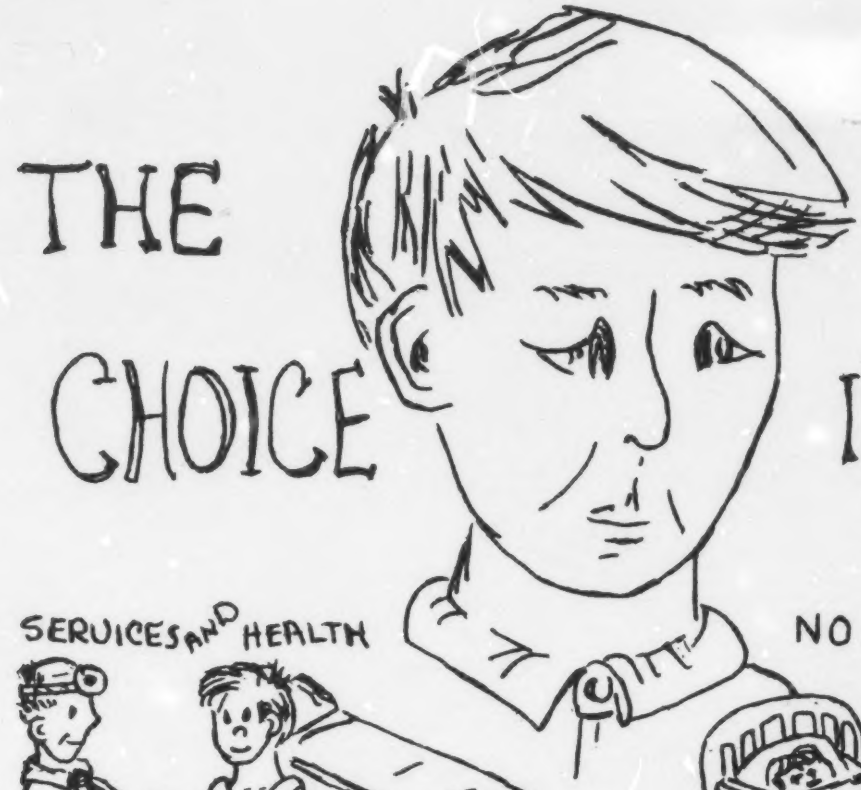

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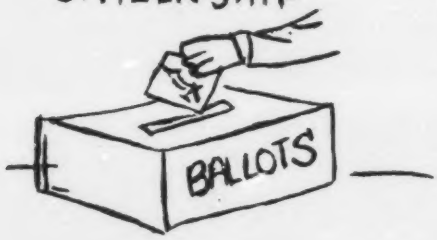

PUBLIC CHARGE

In a society such as ours, every student has some contribution to make. These young people are entrusted to us; and as educators, it is our obligation to be constantly seeking to identify and develop each persons capabilities.

Those who have the privilege of working with the handicapped have an even greater charge. The handicap may or may not be readily identifiable; but, in addition to this, we must help the students in their adjustment to utilize their abilities in relation to their handicap. It is not enough to offer sympathy, understanding, and special classes. We must offer concrete experiences in the every-day adult world into which they must fit. As is usually the case, people with handicaps have specific contributions they can make to the community in which they live. In the areas of work performance, there are particular jobs which the handicapped may accomplish in a better fashion than "normal" or gifted individuals.

Students with handicaps can function effectively when we give them understanding, affection, and respect, and help them learn to derive a sense of pleasure and contentment from being productive. This effective functioning comes as a result of a total program designed to prepare each student to fit successfully into the community, utilizing his specific ability to the utmost. An individual approach helps a student attain a degree of dignity and a sense of worth which the handicapped often lack.

To meet the needs of students with handicaps at the secondary level, the educational concept of work-study has been advocated by leading authorities

in the field for many years. However, there have been some interesting questions raised regarding certain practices that have been going on under the guise of work-study.

A work-study program for students with handicaps, as a part of the total curriculum, will differ in every school district in which it is found because of the diversity of opinion concerning the initiation, administration, coordination, implementation, and operation of this program within the public school structure. As a result of this situation, justifiable and unjustifiable criticisms are going to be forthcoming depending on what those who are doing the criticizing have seen, have done, and what they believe should be done.

We would like to offer some basic recommendations which should be considered in developing a program. These recommendations are a result of personal experiences, observations, and philosophy. While they are not all-inclusive by any means, they can be implemented in most secondary work-study programs for students with handicaps.

The school staff member responsible for placement, supervision, and follow-up will be referred to as the work-study coordinator.

All students with handicaps sixteen years of age or older should be given an opportunity for off-campus employment, preceded, if possible, by on-campus work training.

Prior to graduation or termination from school, students with handicaps should have contact with the community in the world of work situation

if possible. Some will be ready at age sixteen, some at age seventeen, some at age eighteen, and some even later yet. It is advisable not to rush the off-campus placement. The older the student is, chronologically, the more effective the placement will be in most cases. On-campus work should precede this developmental phase in order that students can be observed, and needed work attributes can be developed and improved to meet the needs of the more demanding off-campus real work conditions.

There are some critics who believe that on-campus work training will provide students with sufficient experience and background necessary for effective vocational adjustment after leaving school.

We would question this philosophy based on our experiences with both on- and off-campus employment. Students are not usually paid for on-campus work--school credit is given. Therefore, a major factor necessary for successful vocational adjustment is not in evidence. The discipline required for regular work is generally not emphasized to any great degree in most on-campus jobs. Both certificated and classified personnel tend to work with students in an entirely different relationship than an employer who is paying an hourly wage.

The on-campus work is where habits, strengths, weaknesses, interests, abilities, and general attitudes toward work orientation are observed in a semi-sheltered situation. The results of this experience will be a major factor in the off-campus placement.

The off-campus experience is necessary because the students and the school need to find out what has to be accomplished in the personal, social,

academic, and vocational areas before the formal education is completed. How can we know if our objectives are being realized without the opportunity to observe the students in the transfer of learning process from the school to the community setting? We cannot picture an athletic team always practicing but never playing a game where they put their training to work. Not only must they play the game to put their ability to the test, but they must have the opportunity to come back the following week and practice again to profit from their mistakes. The off-campus work phase is an important part of the total work-study program. It should be given equal consideration.

It has been our experience to observe that students with handicaps who do not have off-campus work included in the educational experience tend to lean toward initial employment in an area either above or below their actual potential, or they just do not become productively employed. These problems can be avoided, in most cases, with an effective work-study program designed for each student.

Students should be considered for placement only when the work-study coordinator, teachers with whom they come in contact, parents, and students themselves believe they are ready for, or need, a job.

There are situations when students need a job, financially, to stay in school. If this is not the case, students should be placed on a job where they have every possibility for success consistent with interest, ability, social maturity, emotional stability, and physical capacity.

Ability, social maturity, and emotional stability are areas that can generally be improved upon for most students; but they especially warrant serious consideration in initial job placement for the handicapped.

If there are those students who need a job, financially, to stay in school, then, by all means, arrange the best placement possible. There are also those students who have a multiplicity of problems within the school setting and might also benefit from a part-time placement prior to the time that we would really like to place them. These students also need placements under the best possible conditions for them.

Generally speaking, each case must be considered in its own light, and a decision made accordingly because too many mistakes in placement can have an adverse effect on the students and the program.

Students should come first--the program second.

Too often, school personnel are more concerned about particular programs than about the students for whom the programs have been developed. A major concern should be to fit programs to students rather than fit students to programs. The educational experiences should be designed to enable students with handicaps to make the transition from school to adult community living as smooth and effective as possible.

Students should not be haphazardly placed for the convenience of the school. There needs to be a definite purpose for each placement made. Every phase of the total work-study program should be student-oriented.

The work-study coordinator should have regular contact with the students and be knowledgeable in the field of special education.

A professional understanding of the nature and needs of individuals with handicaps is necessary if this program is to be effective in the classroom and/or the community. Appropriate work placements must be initiated by those who are trained and knowledgeable in special education if programs are to realize their true objectives. In addition, educators must believe the handicapped can function effectively when exposed to a total educational program designed specifically for them.

Programs with personnel who are not adequately trained in special education and who also have pre-conceived ideas about the limitations of the handicapped in both the school and work situations are not in the best interests of those whom we serve.

We firmly believe that it is important that those persons responsible for placement and supervision of students with handicaps be well acquainted with the students enrolled in the program. We don't see how persons could place and supervise students effectively if they did not know anything about them. Programs that have assigned this function to someone outside the special education department, generally, have not been too successful. Those assigned this responsibility should be either a teacher of the handicapped or a person whose main function is placement and supervision, but who is a part of the department and has regular contact with the students. They know him and he knows them.

The work-study coordinator should assume the major part of the responsibility for students working.

Unnecessary burdens should not be placed on employers. Their responsibility is to provide the place of employment, assist in the training necessary for satisfactory job performance, help develop desirable work attributes, and participate in formal and informal evaluations with the students and the work-study coordinator.

The school's function should include career guidance and counseling of students; job analysis and observation; parent orientation; Social Security card application; issuing work permits; coordination of school and work schedules; arranging transportation to and from the job; supervision; complying with Federal, state, and local labor and educational laws; plus a myriad of other details necessary when placements are made.

Employers are more likely to cooperate in a work-study program when they have the assurance that they have someone to call who is readily available if problems arise which affect the work training of students. The coordinator's ability in handling problem situations acceptable to both employers and student employees can have an important impact on the program's reputation within the community.

The work-study coordinator must be allowed sufficient time to coordinate the school and work program.

A major factor affecting the quality of a work-study program will depend a great deal on placement and supervision practices. Many such programs

have been rendered ineffective because of the lack of understanding among schc . people in realizing the amount of time necessary for proper placement and adequate supervision. We owe it to our students, employers, and ourselves to allow sufficient time for this phase of the program if we are to be effective in realizing our objectives.

Work-study programs should be scheduled to allow students to take part in extra-curricular activities if they so desire.

A major criticism of work-study programs is that, because of the amount of time spent in off-campus work, students in the program are often denied the opportunity of participating in activities which are offered in school such as clubs, class meetings, rallies, athletics, field trips, and dances.

This criticism may or may not be justifiable depending on the philosophy and the structure of a given program. We believe students should never be deprived of the opportunity to participate in all or any activities in which they have an interest and a desire to contribute. In those programs where consideration of students is first, the handicapped have taken part in school government, athletics, clubs, and many other extra-curricular activities on an equal and/or near equal basis with other students.

Social inadequacy appears to be one characteristic that is often used by lay persons and general educators to describe students with handicaps when they are in unfamiliar surroundings. If this is the case, more experiences must be provided to improve this situation. Social skills are a definite asset for vocational competence.

The work-study coordinator, in cooperation with the school and employers, must make arrangements for students to participate in activities of their choice. Work schedules should be arranged to allow them to do so. For example, if there is a bus trip to a football game, and students want to get off early or not work at all on that day, this should be arranged. Senior activities are also a "must" for those who will be graduating. Another example might be a football player who has an off-campus job in the work-study program. Our recommended procedure would be to have the student not work until after the playing season is completed. This is also an opportunity to place and observe another student on this particular job, with the idea of a regular off-campus placement when the football player returns to work. Personal experience has shown that employers are very willing to cooperate in these situations.

Students should have the opportunity to participate in regular class programs whenever possible--this should be the rule rather than the exception.

Students should have the opportunity to be exposed to as many different people as they can adjust to without too much difficulty. This should be gradual, beginning in the upper elementary school and carried through junior and senior high school. They should be included in regular classes where they have an interest and some ability to achieve reasonable success and satisfaction. Many students with handicaps have achieved excellent results in academic classes as well as in home economics; crafts; wood, metal, auto, and electric shop; typing; photography; art; choir; physical education; driver education and training; and reading improvement.

Educators have operated too long under the assumption that students with handicaps need the security and shelter of the self-contained classroom and one teacher. In the primary and early elementary years this may be true to some extent, as with other youngsters as well; but, if we really believe in our objective to make them independently functioning, then experiences must be provided in the educational program to help bring this about. As students can benefit, they need to come in contact with more people in a variety of situations. Constant observations and evaluations will enable us to adjust the curriculum to meet individual needs as they arise.

Programs should be organized so that students can meet the minimum requirements for graduation with a high school diploma.

It doesn't make sense to spend great sums of money for special classes from primary through high school and then not award a diploma to those students with handicaps who have completed the course of study prescribed for them. This has been a major problem, especially with the educable mentally retarded. They are certainly entitled to the same consideration as college-bound, regular, and trade and vocational students.

It is often said educable mentally retarded students will attempt to enroll in a college or university if they are given a diploma--we have yet to know any who have done this on their own. Some have been encouraged to participate in certain programs at the community college, which, in most cases, is a college designed to serve the needs of those within a wide range of abilities

and interests. If true educable mentally retarded students tried to enroll in a four-year college or university, the school from which they graduated needs to examine the effectiveness of their counseling and guidance service to these students.

Another common comment from the unknowledgeable is that employers in the community often complain about students who have graduated from high school and have a poor understanding of the basic academic skills--they can't read, they can't spell, etc.; we have heard it many times. Investigation into these situations has usually shown that these students were not products of special education programs.

Educable mentally retarded students will not too often be involved in work situations which require a great knowledge of the academic skills as we generally think of them. Yet, it is very important that we develop these skills to the extent these students are capable of learning, so that they can be as competent as possible in all areas of living in which they participate.

It would appear that too many artificial barriers are placed in the way of some students with handicaps, such as the educable mentally retarded, for them to receive the high school diploma. With such a premium on the diploma in this day and age, if it is denied to those who go through our programs, we are automatically eliminating them from competing for many jobs they can perform in a satisfactory manner. Let us not educate the handicapped for failure upon leaving our schools.

The classroom program and work training should each be an integral part of the total curriculum structure.

There are many work-study programs where the classroom activities and the work training phase have little or no relationship. This is certainly a justifiable cause for criticism or programs where this is evident.

The secondary curriculum must be based on adult requisites that include effective citizenship, successful family living, preparation for the world of work, and leisure time activities. These areas are all inter-related, and each has an effect on the other.

We must consider that much learning takes place outside the four classroom walls. An artificial barrier, such as the school building, should not prevent us from bringing students in contact with the world of work and the community in which they will live as adults. The community should become an environment for learning, and the realities of the community should be included in the learning experiences for students with handicaps.

A major problem among educators appears to be the term "career oriented" programs. What does "career oriented" mean to the special educator? To some it may mean an emphasis on some type of hand-work activities; to others it could well mean a curriculum that would include the areas previously mentioned, namely--effective citizenship, successful family living, preparation for the world of work, and leisure time activities. The academic skills of reading, writing, spelling, speaking, and arithmetic are equally important areas which have an effect on the vocational competence of individuals, but their effectiveness is linked to application and not to the conventional "book-learning" for "book-learning" itself.

We have no disagreement with those who criticize the abuse and over-emphasis on hand-work activities within the classroom. On the other hand, we cannot agree with those who do not believe that the practical application of academic skills as a tool to use in the development of general competence is an integral part of a "career oriented" program. We would further state, it is our belief that an effective academic program for any group of students, whether handicapped, "normal", or gifted, should be "career oriented" in the way in which we have attempted to define it.

The program should involve as many school personnel as possible.

A major complaint of many special education teachers of students with handicaps is that they are often isolated from the school and faculty. A careful examination of the situation often reveals that this condition tends to exist as a result of being self-imposed. Teachers need to participate on an equal basis with the regular staff. This should include such things as committees, club sponsorship, extra assignments, and orienting the regular staff to the objectives of the program for the handicapped.

A quality program will include many personnel, both certificated and classified, actively participating in the implementation of the program. Experience has shown that many regular class teachers become ardent supporters of special classes when they are properly oriented to the total program. In some cases, they have become interested to the point where they have taken additional training to become qualified as special education teachers.

We would advise that the special education program not be referred to as my or our program, but rather the program at _____ school. This reference makes it everybody's program and not just that of the special education department.

The image that all educational programs have, in all schools, at all levels, depends on the personnel responsible for such programs. Let us continually strive to improve the image of all programs for the handicapped.

There should be selective placement in choosing under whom and where students should work.

We cannot be too careful in being highly selective in approving work training stations for students who are ready to begin this phase of the program. There have been too many situations where students have been placed to build up the number of placements. For some reason, programs are not generally judged on the quality but on the quantity (the number of students working). We should not emphasize numbers, but should be concerned with placements that are appropriate in terms of the individual nature and needs of the students, and with those employers who clearly understand and adhere to the objectives of the program.

We find, as many others do, in most cases, there are specific job solicitations for specific students. A program that has high standards and maintains them will be respected for it, and all other facets will fall into place accordingly.

A task force comprised of community leaders who have the power to make decisions, might be desirable.

A task force comprised of the right people can be one factor in the success of a work-study program. We would caution against having just anybody on the committee. The group should be action oriented under the leadership of the work-study coordinator.

Some possibilities for representation would be: the school board; district administration; department of employment; vocational rehabilitation; chamber of commerce; city, county, and state officials; probation; social welfare; labor unions; retail merchants association; and possibly representatives from those service clubs who express an interest. Committee membership will vary somewhat from one community to another depending on the particular needs of a given geographical location.

The importance of evaluations should be stressed to employers, students, and parents.

The evaluation is the device used to determine the students' strengths, weaknesses, and areas of needed improvement in terms of their total educational program. It is also used to determine grades for work performance demonstrated on a job placement both on- and off-campus.

Employers should be provided with a rating sheet to be used in the evaluation process on a regular systematic basis, preferably at regular grading times.

There also needs to be several informal evaluation sessions during the year between employers and students; employers and coordinator; employers,

students, and coordinator; students and coordinator; parents and coordinator; and students, parents, and coordinator.

Frequent evaluations are valuable from the standpoint of giving the coordinator an opportunity to observe student performance which needs to be corrected or improved, and in turn, to devote time in class or in informal evaluation sessions to study and discuss ways and means to accomplish the necessary correction or improvement.

The Education Code and Federal, state, and local labor laws should be complied with at all times.

This is another area where public schools have been justifiably criticized in that laws have been willfully disregarded for the convenience of the schools in placement practices of students enrolled in work-study programs. We consider this to be not only illegal, but immoral. How can we teach students to obey the laws of the school, community, state, and nation on one hand and turn right around and break laws for our so-called convenience? This is an excellent example of the "double-standard" that widens the generation gap that is so frequently referred to in today's society.

The laws are clearly stated in Federal, state, and local regulations; and as educators, we must be aware of their provisions and adhere to them at all times. If there is a genuine need or shortcoming in some of these laws, interested persons and groups should help sponsor and support legislation to change or correct them.

If public schools are to teach students to be law-abiding citizens, then the public schools themselves must be law-abiding.

Liability responsibility must be clearly understood by all--students, parents, employers, and the schools.

Students participating in work-study programs must have adequate insurance protection against accident and injury. It is recommended that both employers and schools carry insurance that will include coverage to provide students with such protection, as well as liability insurance that will protect them against a damage suit resulting from an accident or injury.

A work-hour arrangement beneficial to students and employers both should be agreed upon with due consideration of the following factors: type and degree of handicap, personal health, school-hour attendance, extra-curricular activities, home responsibilities, personal feelings, and employers need.

As previously mentioned, students should have first consideration in any educational program. The number of hours students work will vary according to the factors listed and at what point they are functioning effectively in their educational program. This is an important decision the work-study coordinator must make. In some states, labor and educational laws limit the number of hours students may work.

Our recommendation is to keep within the law and to consider the students and all the factors involved. At the maximum, school and work should have equal time.

Students should be paid at least the minimum wage for off-campus productive employment and class credit given if employed during school hours.

The work-study coordinator should see that students are not exploited in any way for the convenience of the school or for employers.

Students should be paid for work performed on off-campus jobs. If they are not productive enough to be paid, they are not ready to be placed off-campus. There are some states, however, that have minimum wage regulations for minors that permit a lower rate than for adults. This provides opportunities for placements that might otherwise be difficult to obtain. The most important thing to keep in mind is to see that students are paid at least the basic minimum wage required by law.

Receiving pay for work gives much status to both students and programs. It has been our experience that parents, relatives, neighbors, teachers, peers, and others realize for the first time that these students can achieve success, be worthwhile citizens, and contribute to the welfare of the community when pay is involved in their working. Employers do not employ people and pay wages for work which is not being performed satisfactorily. This, in turn, has a tremendous effect on the total living experiences of the handicapped in terms of attitudes of the family, school, and the community toward them.

We are not particularly in favor of over-subsidizing students with handicaps because they are not really being paid directly out of an employer's pocket. Again, as has been mentioned in the on-campus work--not being paid directly by an employer does not bring the required discipline needed for vocational competence into the situation.

We would advise that, with some help from sources such as Vocational Rehabilitation, N.Y.C., and others, you initiate a program where students start out with being paid. Those who claim that getting students with handicaps paid is a difficult task are usually in areas where programs were started without students being paid. In our years of experience, pay for those students in off-campus work stations has not been a problem.

We have found, when students with handicaps have participated in an effective program receiving pay for work performed off-campus, desirable changes such as improved attendance; better dress and grooming; participation in school activities; purchasing class rings, yearbooks, graduation announcements and cards; and positive attitudes toward school and society in general have been very evident. Educationally speaking, much can be accomplished in terms of learning experiences by earning money.

Some programs are initiated that include "career exploration" where credit only is given and no pay is involved. However, it is our recommendation that students have the opportunity to explore several job areas, and the exploration time be limited to one school year. Appropriate pre-vocational skill training should precede the exploratory phase with on-the-job training and productive employment following in that order. School credit and pay should be given in these latter two phases.

There are occasional students with handicaps who are not considered employable while still in school. These are situations where a community task force can contribute in working together to make appropriate arrangements such as placement in a sheltered environment, utilizing other sources in the community, or even keeping them in school for a longer period of time than is usually

required. If there is no task force, the work-study coordinator can usually work out some arrangement to the satisfaction of all concerned. We have found that unemployable students with handicaps are the exception rather than the rule. The type and degree of handicap and the work training are the primary considerations. Personal experience has shown that most students with handicaps can become employable as adults if they are provided with appropriate educational experiences which include work-study opportunities.

A definite policy should be established regarding school credit given for time worked during school hours, and the number of credits that can be applied toward graduation.

The work-study coordinator should be professionally competent and qualified to represent the school in the community.

The success or failure of work-study programs for students with handicaps will depend a great deal on the ability of the work-study coordinator to establish excellent working relationships with students; parents; school personnel; the community at large; and Federal, state, and local agencies. He must keep in mind at all times that he is the representative of the public school in the community. To some people, he is the only direct contact they have with the school. Therefore, it is extremely important that his representation be on a high level.

Although the program is primarily designed to serve the handicapped, it can become an excellent means of informing the community concerning the total educational program provided within the school district.

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There is much to be learned about appropriate educational programs for all youth. In reference to the handicapped, one must continually be searching to more effectively provide the best educational program possible. Any attempt short of this can be justifiably criticized in terms of the money and time spent for teacher training, research, and public school programs.

At the secondary level, the work-study program in its proper prospectus has, in most cases, proven to be a valuable asset to the handicapped in relationship to their total educational experience. We must keep in mind that the school is not a placement agency but an educational institution; and the major emphasis on all phases of the program should be that of education.

We feel that, if the preceding recommendations are generally adhered to, depending on the particular situation within a given community, the program will be one of which the students with handicaps, regular students, the school district and staff, and the community can mutually benefit and be justly proud.

Responsibility to these students should not end when they leave school. There are many problems and adjustments to be made and the school can often help because of the relationships established. Our doors should never be closed, and the students should know that we are available should a need arise.

Programs must be constantly changing to meet the needs of the students and the communities in which they live. They must have the support of school boards, administration, faculties, classified personnel, and lay persons.

When this occurs, young men and women, who were once destined to a life of unproductivity and/or dependence on the state, become useful, independent, contributing citizens.

From a monetary standpoint, which seems to be of such importance these days, money will be saved. From the human worth standpoint, which is of inestimable importance, dignity and respect will have been achieved.